

This letter was sent in mid-April.

To: Go America, Hamilton, Nordia, Sprint, and AT&T Relay Providers

I continue to work through the challenges of improving awareness, access and the delivery of Speech to Speech Service across the country. I believe that STS users, relay providers, and state relay services might be better served if there was one center providing STS service for everyone. I have discussed this concept of a centralized STS call center with a relay provider and a state relay administrator and they both agree that this idea may be feasible and may have merit.

Here are my initial thoughts about what I am considering:

- A) There will be one provider of STS nationwide. The current call volume does not justify having multiple providers.
- B) That provider will serve the whole country from one call center with dedicated STS CAs. Because these CAs only do STS calls they will develop sufficient expertise to provide excellent service. CAs will be paid enough to establish a career path. Thought should be given to requiring CAs to be qualified speech language pathologists, so that they would have a thorough understanding of the physiology of STS users. They would probably need to be paid as much as video relay interpreters, but there would be very few of them, at least at the beginning, given low call volume. The high quality of the CAs would help alleviate users abandoning STS because of low quality CAs.
- C) STS would be a national service controlled by the FCC, possibly through NECA, or a contractor. No state has sufficient call volume to justify a state run STS service. It is inefficient to have state run STS services.
- D) Costs for intrastate STS calls and a pro-rated share of outreach costs will be reimbursed by the states to the FCC through NECA.
- E) The single national STS provider will be responsible for developing a five year plan for STS outreach. This plan will identify each potential user of STS and give them as much information about STS as the public has about general telephone service.
- F) This five year plan will include trials of the various STS outreach techniques to determine which technique is most effective in building call volume.
- G) The provider's contract will include provisions to prohibit abuse of the system by people without speech disabilities.
- H) The 711 announcement nationwide will direct STS consumers to "Dial 1 for STS". This will not add substantially to the length of the announcement and will provide new users with easy access to STS. One impediment to STS use for new users is having to ask the 711 operator for STS. There are too few STS calls for operators to remember how to transfer on calls to STS.

These changes should benefit all STS providers financially by relieving them of the obligation to provide STS service in very small markets.

I would appreciate hearing your thoughts, concerns, and feedback on this idea. Could you please give me your input? I would like to establish as much agreement among the providers as possible before I take this to the state relay administrators and the FCC. I am open to modifying this proposal to build a consensus among providers and my consumer organization (SCT).

Sincerely

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President, Speech Communications Assistance by Telephone, Inc.